

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MILAN 02724 201439Z
ACTION SY-05

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SUBJECT: MILAN SECURITY SITUATION

REF ROME 19850, ROME 20489, DEPT 305842

SUMMARY: UPSURGE IN POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN THIS AREA DIFFICULT
TO FATHOM BUT EXTENT UNDENIABLE AND THREAT TO US OFFICIALS PROBABLY
ON INCREASE.

1. AS LARGEST CITY NORTH OF ROME WITH OVER 3 MILLION
INHABITANTS IN GREATER MILAN, CITY HAS PREDICTABLE BUDGET OF
ORDINARY CRIME BOTH VIOLENT AND OTHER. WHILE THIS IS AGGRAVATING
FACTOR TRYING DOWN POLICE RESOURCES, MAJOR POLITICAL ISSUE
IS POLITICALLY MOTIVATED VIOLENCE.

2. EMBASSY ROME'S EXCELLENT 19850 AND 20489 SUGGEST GENERAL
TREND. WE ARE UNABLE TO PROVIDE HARD FIGURES ON PHENOMENA IN THIS
AREA AND POLICE REFUSE TO PROVIDE ANY DATA FROM THEIR OWN
RECORDS. POLICE CHIEF WILL ONLY AGREE THAT SITUATION VERY
SERIOUS AND THAT LEFT WING POLITICAL NETWORK WHICH HE
BELIEVES BEHIND VIOLENCE SO SUCCESSFULLY COMPARTMENTALIZED THAT
IT CANNOT BE BROKEN UP.

3. NEVERTHELESS, SOME OBSERVATIONS FROM THE SCENE ARE IN
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PAGE 02 MILAN 02724 201439Z

ORDER. FIRST, WE SENSE THAT POLICE HAVE ORDERS TO TAKE MORE
AGGRESSIVE ACTION TO CRACK DOWN ON EXTREME LEFT TERRORISTS.
IN PAST HIGHEST SECURITY OFFICIALS HERE HAVE COMPLAINED THAT
CABINET REFUSED TO AUTHORIZE TOUGH POLICY SO AS AVOID INCIDENT
THAT COMMUNISTS COULD EXPLOIT. NOW, HOWEVER, WE SENSE (BUT
CANNOT PROVE) THAT POLICE HAVE SOMEWHAT MORE APPROVAL TO BE

TOUGH. PRESUMABLY DC AND COMMUNISTS ARE AGREED TO SUCH AN APPROACH WHICH WOULD HIT EXTREMISTS TO LEFT OF COMMUNISTS WHO ARE ALSO COMPETITORS OF COMMUNISTS.

4. THIS COULD EXPLAIN SHOOT OUT IN MILAN DEC 15 IN WHICH TWO POLICE AND ONE RED BRIGADE MILITANT DIED WHEN THEY TRIED ARREST HIM. (POLICE, INCIDENTIALLY, APPEAR POORLY TRAINED FOR TASK ACCORDING DEA LAW OFFICER ON CONSULATE STAFF AND NOT EVEN IN THIS PLANNED SEIZURE WERE POLICE WEARING BODY ARMOR.)

5. DEC 16 SAW FATAL BOMBING IN NEARBY BRESCIA APPARENTLY AIMED AT POLICE, POSSIBLY AS REVENGE FOR MILAN ACTION.

6. LATEST EXTREME LEFT WING TERRORIST ATTACK MADE ON COMPUTER CENTER OF ITALY'S MAJOR CHEMICAL FIRM, MONTEDISON ON DEC 19. THREE MEN AND ONE WOMAN ARMED WITH REVOLVERS AND MACHINE GUNS BROKE INTO COMPUTER CENTER, IMMOBILIZED PERSONNEL AND SET OFF TWO BOMBS BEFORE ESCAPING. POLICE RUSHED TO SCENE AND, AS MEASURE INCREASING JUMPINESS, STARTED SHOOTING AND WOUNDED ONE OF THEMSELVES.

7. THESE INCIDENTS FOLLOWED MAJOR RIOTS IN MILAN DEC 7 LED BY EXTREME LEFT ATTACKING OPENING OF LA SCALA. ON 13 DECEMBER SIXTEEN YEAR OLD DAUGHTER OF WEALTHY HONORARY CONSUL GENERAL OF INDIA SEIZED AT GUNPOINT AND BEING HELD FOR RANSOM. PREVIOUS SHOOTINGS, BOMBINGS AND KIDNAPPINGS LITERALLY TOO NUMEROUS TO CATALOGUE.

8. MOST INTERESTING REACTION TO LATEST POLICE KILLINGS WAS DEMONSTRATION BY SEVERAL HUNDRED SECURITY POLICE AT DOWN-TOWN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MILAN 02724 201439Z

POLICE HEADQUARTERS. ACCORDING PUBLISHED ACCOUNTS (OFFICIALS WILL SAY NOTHING), DEMONSTRATORS COMPLAINED THAT THEY WERE TAKING TOO MANY RISKS, THAT BEING ASKED TO SACRIFICE LIVES LEAVING WIDOWS AND ORPHANS BEHIND. WHILE PRESS ACCOUNTS SIMILAR, ROMAN DEMONSTRATION PUT MORE STRESS ON REQUEST FOR TOUGHER LINE WITH TERRORISTS, THAT NOT IMPRESSION IN MILAN. RATHER, POLICE HERE SEEM TO BE ASKING LESS EXPOSURE.

9. WE ARE HARD PUT INTERPRET INTENSITY OF TERRORIST UPSWING AND MEANING OF LOCAL POLICE REACTION. BUT WE WONDER WHETHER THIS MEANS RANK AND FILE POLICE ARE BACKING OFF FROM CONFLICT. AS YET, TOO SOON TO KNOW.

10. THEME RUNNING THROUGH CURRENT PHASE OF VIOLENCE IS ATTACK ON DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM, ON RICH AND PRIVLEDGED. THIS WAS ISSUE WITH LA SCALA, WITH ATTACK ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL, AND WITH LIGHTENING RAIDS ON MOTION PICTURE HOUSES TO FORCE REDUCTIONS IN TICKET PRICES. ATTACK IN EARLY OCTOBER

ON SOUTH AFRICAN CONSULATE GENERAL IN WHICH ENTRY FORCED, CONGEN
HELD, OFFICES DEVASTATED AND FIRE ATTEMPTED WAS AIMED AT
SOUTH AFRICAN RACIAL POLICIES. FIRE BOMBING ATTACKS ON
SPANISH AND IRANIAN OFFICES ALMOST ROUTINE BUT ALSO RELATED TO
FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES RATHER THAN INTERNAL ITALIAN POLITICS.

10. THIS PICTURE WEAK IN ANALYSIS AND IN STATISTICS. BUT IT DOES
CONVEY FAIRLY ACCURATE IMPRESSION OF CLIMATE THAT HAS BECOME MORE
TENSE DURING PAST COUPLE OF WEEKS.

11. WHILE WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE (NOR WOULD POLICE BE LIKELY
TO PROVIDE IT) THAT CONSULATE OFFICERS ARE ON ANYONE'S LIST, WE
DO NOT DOUBT THAT USG IS CONSIDERED ENEMY BY ITALIAN EXTREME LEFT
AND THAT IN PERIOD OF HEIGHTENED TENSION, CHANCES THAT WE WILL BE
TARGETED ARE ALSO INCREASED.

12. WE THEREFORE REQUESTED INCREASED POLICE PROTECTION ON DECEMBER 8
AND HAVE BEEN INFORMED THAT IT WILL BE PROVIDED. HOWEVER, ADDED
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PROTECTION NOT YET ON DUTY AND UPROAR FOLLOWING MILAN AND
BRESCIA TURMOIL COULD FURTHER DELAY OBTAINING IT.FINA

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